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### THE VANDERBILT HOUSES.

WHEN it is considered how liberal a patron of the European artist and artizan the American millionaire has been, it is not to be wondered at that there should have been aroused a genuine European interest in the aristocratic and artistic American home. This interest has naturally followed the foreign work of art to its new domicile, and has, so to speak, attached itself to the casket containing the gem. The American palace has indeed become so much an object of interest abroad that no less a publication than the "London Magazine of Art" has seen fit to employ its artists and writers to portray the exterior and interior of one of the Vanderbilt mansions in this city. And so excellently well has this work been executed that we have purchased the plates as well as the letter-press, and, with some additions of our own, present them to our readers in the present number of THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

### THE CONSOLIDATED EXCHANGE.

IN pursuance of our regular policy of showing our readers the best examples of interior decoration, whether in public or private structures, we this month give them a very handsome plate representing the new building of the Consolidated Stock and Petroleum Exchange. It is undoubtedly the best attempt to represent a building of the kind ever made in this country, and reflects credit upon the artists who draughted and the lithographic firm who reproduced it.

A PRESENT changed tendency connected with floral arrangements is pleasingly and to be heartily approved. To a great extent the whole matter is becoming freed from artificiality, the wondrous beauty of nature being presented in decoration in as natural forms as possible. From this idea a plant basket which has been developed will be generally favored. Within this is set a zinc basin of a size to fit, and being lined with silver paper and filled with sufficient earth to sustain plants for some length of time. The border of the basket, rolled outward and downward, is fringed over with moss, while in the bed of earth are such flowering plants as tulips, violets, lilies of the valley, English crocuses and Dutch hyacinths. Another variety of basket in higher form is to contain a jar of water, the two

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providing respectively for plants and for art flowers. Some of the leading designers have completely banished mirrors in the adornment of tables. A large basket of flowers may be placed in the centre, with small baskets connected at intervals around, with loose flowers strewn between them. One form of favor is a small gypsy bonnet filled with spring flowers, and with a long end of one of its ribbons extended to the place to be occupied by the recipient. Another attractive form of flower holders is that of glass globes, painted by hand with a design of daisies or other flowers, and tied around the neck with satin ribbon, leaving one long streamer for an index, as in the case of the bonnet. The flowers preferred for Eastertide arrangements were the spring varieties, with the addition of new roses, as the Marie Antoinette, the Puritan and Princess of Wales, of which the two last-named, from being white, are favorites of the time. The flowers are selected, however, in different cases to match these objects, as for a recent dinner in yellow. For Easter, white, pink and yellow predominate, the bunches of spring flowers being tied with ribbon to match in tint. Among favored recent forms of baskets is the Marie Antoinette, which is not unlike the fish basket, although with larger handle. One fine variety, arranged originally for orchids, is adorned in silvery heliotrope wide satin ribbon, which forms a hanging border around the top, the handle being covered and finished with a bow to correspond. Another novelty is the lapageria alba for the bridal bouquet, the rarest variety, with the exception of that of orchids, which can be made. Other bridal bouquets, reckoned as novelties, are in Cape jessamine. A fancy is maintained for silvered baskets in connection with silver wedding celebrations, and gilded baskets figure in golden anniversaries of this order. The Boulanger basket is among the popular varieties, and being in semblance of the much represented military hat inverted, is apparently not yet put on the retired list.

THE fact is noticed that more novelties in brass manufacture are developed in the United States than in England. These are frequently exported, as on the last outgoing of the "Umbria," which had on board a brass onyx table and other articles in like material for Horton House, in Yorkshire. Another recent exportation went to Scotland, the British demand for this class of articles, especially in the variety of easels, being considerable.

WE have two distinct sources of decorative work—purely ornamental design and figure subjects. In the former branch the art of the past contains some of the finest possible models, but the artistic worker should aim to originate new details on these lines and new combinations of color. Figure designing is the representation of poetic or idealized subjects. The Pompeian figures afford an excellent idea of the manner in which the ancients gave grace to their figures, avoiding overloaded composition or confusing hues and lines.

ORNAMENT is in its best forms the kind of design which results from the application of thought to the treatment of natural forms. It is not imitation of nature; it is nature taken as the basis upon which to build a new creation. The French have the credit of inventiveness, but there is scarcely an example to be found in the French work of the 18th century which comes under this definition of tasteful ornament. Ornamental details of the period may be classed under three heads: That which is an imitation of Roman ornament, more or less modified by the practice of Renaissance architects; that which is an imitation of artificial objects, such as wreaths, ribbons, festoons, and so on; and that which is merely play of line in the way of scroll and other such forms. Such ornament of the better form may be very good and very interesting, so long as it is sufficiently abstract in form to appear merely as the representation of proportion in space and contour, and is treated in such a manner as to emphasize the construction and expression of the furniture or other object to which it may be applied. But the ornament of this class of the French eighteenth century work, which we have referred to for illustration, is not abstract. It looks like very corrupted forms of detail of Roman architecture and Roman design, of parts put together without any connection with each other, and without any clear flow of line or appearance of what may be called constructive truthfulness; it seems to be put there because the artist knew not what else to put; because the thing was to be handsome, and that was then the fashionable kind of handsomeness. The details derived from classic art, sometimes well treated and sometimes ill, have that second-hand character and second-hand interest which always belongs to imitation art. The imitation of common-place artificial objects, as golden or ormolu drapery over a clock case, instead of suggestive and typical forms of nature, is vulgar taste, simply exhibiting the costliness of the material and the cleverness of the manipulator in addition to filling space. There is little or no thought in this school of

work for the most part; its good qualities are a certain elegance in the best productions and an exquisite workmanship, in which no pains and no time seem to have been spared towards doing the best that lay in the artist's power.

BEAUTIFUL workmanship—workmanship in which no trouble and expense has been spent in attaining perfection, often represents a period of vitiated artistic style, and does not illustrate what ornament and design should be. The furniture of the Louis Quinze and Louis Seize periods represents some of the richest, most gorgeous and most painstaking, as well as successful work which the world has ever seen, but it also represents in many instances a frivolous and false taste, in which glitter and luxury, richness and ostentation, were prized above pure art.

THERE are combinations of lines which may be termed capricious, their capriciousness being something different from erratic composition, which, though displaying every variety of figure, has no subject. Such are angular arrangements of the homogeneous curve, and circular arrangements of the homogeneous angle, combinations that may be multiplied to any extent, harmonic ratios being attended to. With these as a basis very beautiful patterns may be produced, the component curves combining to produce various forms, the design being varied, or its parts successively developed according to the different oblique points from which they are viewed, variety being increased by giving certain portions of the component curves greater intensity of color or greater breadth than the rest, the effect being aided by the symmetrical spacing of particular tints.

FOR repetition those forms are best which in themselves are not of prominent interest. Soft coloring in painting, low relief in molding, tend to abate the appearance of monotonousness, the eye being tempted to wander over the surface rather than inspect figures in detail. The absolute necessity of the introduction of repetition in wall paper calls particularly for special adaptation of the ornament. Repetition is confessedly at the same time an element of decoration, and certain effects to be guarded against should stimulate the skill and ingenuity of the artist. Where it occurs in painting it is easy to introduce by touches of different alternating colors a certain degree of variety in the figures.

ONE principle must never be overlooked—the more naturalistic a form the less will it bear repetition; if repeated it should be modified as far as possible. Where the form is the same, the touching the different masses up with different colors supplies welcome means of variation. This applies to oil and distemper and fresco painting. Figures have their charms detracted from by multiplications. The weariness that ensues from gazing on a field of brilliant bouquets on wall paper is known to every one, this feeling being increased by formal regularity. In some charming designs on wall papers, the forms, though close to nature and repeated, but in delicate tints, are distributed with studied irregularity and connected together by variously curved lines; further variety is secured by different shading, as in leaves, some of these appearing to float beneath the surface in lustrous depths of color. There is an evident reaction just now against extreme conventionalism in rendering natural objects on panels, mural surfaces and ceilings. The conventionalism favored is that which by skillful selection of features in the objects rendered preserves the main characteristics, so that they are easily recognizable, while displaying vigor and grace.

WE may here acknowledge the success with which ceramic artists have introduced variety in their sets, the same idea in new forms, thus advancing decorative art.

WHERE forms are planted in an independent shape, there is always a difficulty in connecting them, and success will be the greater where the lines do not reveal a distinct geometric plan. There is more skill shown where the disposition of parts, whilst pleasing in effect, do not reveal the precise basis of arrangement.

THE precise outlining of form carried throughout the whole of mural decoration in relief work or color, is apt to impart a hardness of look by no means of an artistic character. In pictorial painting we see how much beauty is gained by sinking the boundaries of the form in the ground; in addition to repose there is something of suggestiveness to the imagination in merging the contours in a semi-transparent depth. Outline serves

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its purpose in giving clearness of definition to certain forms intended to be readily distinguished at some distance or to emphasize parts on which light is assumed to fall, but emphasis is weakened and abandoned in all pervading clear hard outlines. Of vague forms it has been well said that they depend much on



A NOVEL TILING DESIGN.

the touch and feeling of the artist. Such treatment does not exclude the use of bold lines in a design, intended promptly to arrest the eye as related to the structural division of parts, leaving the details to be afterwards successively scanned. Outlining may be used also for modifying tone, supplying a contrast of sharpness to certain parts of a design, or greater clearness where the object is seen from a distance.

THE judicious dealing with interspaces is among the triumphs of the decorator. If diapering, in which contrast of line with the main form or mass of ornamentation is required, is resorted to, there is a wider choice in selection than decorators in general practically acknowledge, there being undoubtedly too much of inconsiderate adoption of old types. One effective mode of interspacing is allowing the ornament when of a character suitable for this purpose, as a trailing plant, to break out, as it were, from its prescribed bounds.

THIS country has the best imaginative tendencies and capacities of the age, and it may well be looked to in the future for the highest development of decorative art. To use the motifs of old art is not wrong when we cannot get on without them, but they should be mainly studied to help the formation of taste, to lift our minds to a high level and hinder them from grovelling in routine. It may serve to stimulate our ideas before they are expressed and enable us to get into relation with traditional methods of treating subjects on hand, but do not let us borrow in order to compose a new design. The best corrective to all improper leaning is the fostering of individuality.

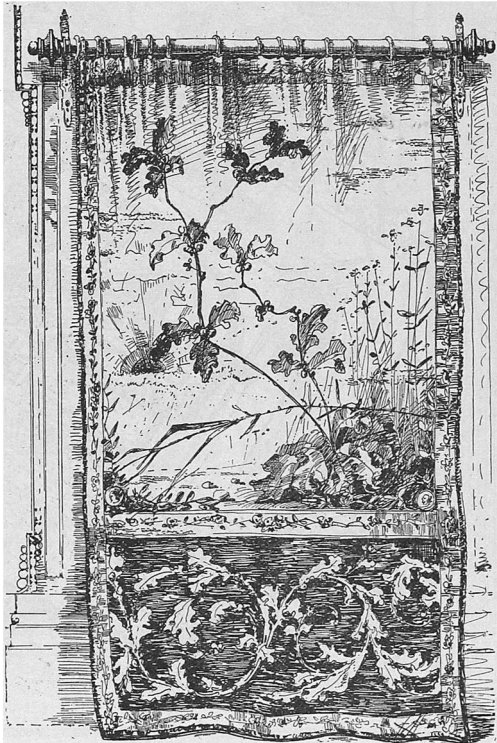
THE best decorative carving exhibits a subordination or grouping of the masses by means of different planes, so that a distance and middle distance are preserved as in painting. Profiled one before the other the three planes have the appearance and effect of lineal perspective. By not giving to each part the same prominence, apparent intricacy in the lines and convolutions of leaves and scrolls are avoided. The departure that has taken place in furniture by the abandonment of all-over patterns in carving for centre or corner pieces, or both, is a decided advance in taste, securing greater breadth in design, more effectually emphasizing constructive details, giving fuller play to the charms of rich cabinet woods best displayed on a flat surface, besides securing greater care and skill in the execution of the carving thus minimised in amount, and which thus disposed excites greater attention. Proper proportionate disposition of divisions, prominences, hollows, all elements of good composition, affords in itself an air of completeness quite apart from skill in execution, whether the designs be in high or low relief. Whatever the amount of detachment, carving should never lose touch in appearance from the mass to which it belongs, and should die gradually into the background. It may be injured by too much

undercutting or too much shadow. Decorative carving cannot be carried except to a limited degree to the direct imitation of nature.

THERE are individuals who are puzzled where to stop in finishing a design. The important point in the effect of the design in place and finish may be carried too far, and ornamental features be unduly multiplied. A finish to an excess lessens the pleasure of the spectator, as not allowing play for the imagination. Suggestive art, leaving something beyond actual expression, is the most interesting.

HOW many art productions have arisen from a felt sense of the unitary influence to be found in abiding by the suggestion of natural forms. Grace is required in design far more than elaboration, and power is shown in producing light and cheerful expression. Much decorative work aiming at dignity is simply heavy and dull. The fact that many people are unwilling to be surrounded with any furniture that is not actually antique or at least fashioned on lines suggested by old models, is not that furniture improves with time or has any peculiar charm in past associations, but that the work itself is entitled to respect, thought and mind having been put into it, and having an existence as real as the thought of the writer, the architect, the sculptor or the painter. No definite rules can be laid down for conventionalizing and altering natural forms, so as to render them suitable to their purpose. In art as in nature there should be constant variety and change; no two designs in foliage should be precisely alike.

IN ornamental design we may point out the following faults to be avoided: (1) Excessive minuteness of ornament, so that at a short distance some examples lose their character and meaning entirely—their delicacy and richness going for nothing. (2) The too general extension of ornament, thus doing away with the wholesome contrast and rest to the eye obtainable by plain or blank space; in other words, losing breadth and repose. (3) A want of care and attention bestowed on it, and a consequent stiffness and rudeness of character. (4) A want of thought and design in its composition and application. (5) In the case of moldings, shallowness of effect. (6) By introducing ornament for its own sake instead of causing it to ornament construction. (7) The introduction and too frequent use of four centered instead of two centered forms, the former not being seen in nature. (8) A sameness and repetition in ornament and a lack of variety.



FLORENTINE TAPESTRY, BY UTO ARMBRUSIER.